

AMENDMENT

Please delete Figure 1 submitted with the original application and replace it with new Figure 1 attached hereto.

REMARKS

In response to the Official Office Action, a revised Figure 1 that conforms with the text of the specification is submitted herewith. No new matter is added by the new drawing.

Accordingly, it is believed that the objections to the drawings have been overcome.

The Examiner maintains the rejection of claims 1-11 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by the patent to Haber, U.S. Patent No. 5,136,647. As noted in the response to the prior Office Action, the claimed invention creates a time stamp by associating a time difference with identifying data. The Examiner makes two different arguments, both of which are flawed.

First, the Examiner notes that the '647 patent describes the time of a time stamp receipt as being fixed or bounded. The Examiner then asserts that "[b]y 'fixing' a time between D_k and t_{k-1} , a difference is computed." The conclusion reached by the Examiner misconstrues the teaching of the '647 patent. The portions of the specification referred to by the Examiner teach that the time stamps issued by the Time Stamping Authority are sequentially numbered so that the time stamp for a specific document is bounded or fixed by the time stamp for the previous document. The '647 patent simply teaches that the time stamp for a subsequent document cannot precede the time stamp for an earlier document. The '647 patent does not mention computing a difference. Further, even if a difference could be computed, the difference is not itself part of the time stamp.

The second point made by the Examiner is that a 32-bit clock count is necessarily referenced to an agreed-upon start date/time. Applicant does not disagree with the Examiner on this point. That fact, however, does not mean that the '647 patent anticipates claim 1. A 32-bit clock count is simply a count of the elapsed time from the start date/time. It is an absolute

time reference. The current date/time can be obtained by adding the clock count to the reference start date/time. In other words, the current time is the sum of the reference date/time and the clock count. In contrast, claim 1 recites "computing ... a time difference between a predetermined time reference and the time of receipt of said identifying data." Counting the elapsed time from a reference date and computing the difference between a current date and a reference date are not the same thing. In one case, the computer simply reads the current clock count from an address register in memory. In the second case, the computer performs mathematical calculations to determine the time difference between the current time and the time reference.

In short, the '647 patent teaches use of an absolute time value as a time stamp, whereas the claimed invention uses a relative time value as the time stamp. The Examiner's arguments blur the distinction between absolute and relative time values.

For the reasons set forth above, it is respectfully believed that independent claim 1 is not anticipated by Haber. Claims 2-11 depend from claim 1 and therefore should also be allowable. Claim 10 adds the additional limitation that the time reference used to compute the time difference is stored in a public key certificate. This feature is not disclosed in Haber. Accordingly, it is believed that claim 10 is allowable independently of independent claim 1.

Applicant believes that the amendment to the drawing places the application in condition for allowance. If, for some reason, the Examiner believes that the claims are not allowable, the Examiner is requested to contact the undersigned to discuss any remaining issues.

By:

Respectfully submitted,
COATS & BENNETT, P.L.L.C.


David E. Bennett
Registration No. 32,194

P.O. Box 5
Raleigh, NC 27602
Telephone: (919) 854-1844